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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Outcome of proceedings of the Informal meeting of the EU and Eastern Partnership Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, Tallinn, 7 July 2017

The meeting of Justice and Home Affairs ministers from, on the one side, the trio of Presidencies of the Council of the EU (Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria) and, on the other, the Eastern Partnership countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, was an opportunity to discuss, in an open manner, the reforms being carried out by Eastern Partnership countries in a number of domains that are crucial for the strengthening of their institutions and the development of good governance practices.

The outcome of the discussion at the Tallinn informal meeting also constitutes a key contribution to the deliverables of the fifth Eastern Partnership Summit to take place in Brussels on 24 November 2017.

Regarding combat against cybercrime and the strengthening of cybersecurity, the Eastern Partnership countries presented briefly the legislative reforms, as well as the institutional adaptations of recent years to deal with the ever evolving threat of cybercrime. International cooperation was considered key in this area and therefore all participants agreed to keep working jointly for a more effective response to cyber issues, including in the framework of the Eastern Partnership Rule of Law Panel.

Ministers also discussed the use of e-governance solutions in fighting corruption. In their interventions, Eastern Partnership countries highlighted recent reforms aimed at cutting red tape and increasing the transparency of their public administration. Ministers also touched upon the challenges to law enforcement, in particular as far as asset identification and recovery is concerned. While progress is evident in all of the Eastern Partnership countries, more action is needed to consolidate the law enforcement system, including through further cooperation with the EU. Ministers have thus tasked the Eastern Partnership Rule of Law Panel to deal with the role of e-governance as well as with the most pressing challenges of law enforcement practices.

Ministers confirmed their commitment to key judicial reforms, namely to merit-based and transparent recruitment and career systems for judges and prosecutors. They further agreed to deal with this topic in detail before the November 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit, in the framework of the Eastern Partnership Rule of Law Panel.

Ministers took good note of the non-paper circulated by Georgia proposing the set up of a regional network on judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters and the establishment of an annual conference on justice reform.

Ministers were also briefed by the Commission on the revised visa suspension mechanism and on the planned European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

At the end of the meeting, the Presidency issued a statement (in annex) summing up the discussions and highlighting the main commitments agreed by Ministers.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS MINISTERS MEETING TALLINN, 7 JULY 2017 PRESIDENCY STATEMENT

The Ministers responsible for Justice and Home Affairs of Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria, representing the trio of Presidencies of the Council of the EU met in Tallinn on 7 July 2017 with their counterparts from the Eastern Partnership countries of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The European Commission was represented by the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship. The EEAS, Europol and Eurojust were also represented.

Ministers recognised the key role of cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs in the overall framework of the Eastern Partnership and emphasised the importance of their dialogue in the process leading to the **fifth Eastern Partnership Summit** of November 2017. Ministers affirmed their commitment to meeting the Eastern Partnership key deliverables for 2020 pertaining to the Justice and Home Affairs area and focussed their discussions on the following priorities: fight against cybercrime, fight against corruption and key judicial reforms.

The meeting represented an opportunity to discuss **priorities for cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries**, while identifying existing challenges and examining future prospects for further engagement.

Ministers reiterated their joint commitment to take further action to efficiently **combat cybercrime and strengthen cybersecurity**. Ministers discussed their key legislative and operational challenges in the fight against cybercrime with a view to enhancing cooperation at regional and international level and to pursuing further action in the framework of the Eastern Partnership Rule of Law panel.

Ministers underlined the importance of prevention and enforcement in **fighting corruption**, as well as the particular role of e-governance initiatives in addressing corruption matters. In this context, Ministers invited the Eastern Partnership Rule of Law panel to discuss at one of its forthcoming meetings the issues related to **asset tracing and recovery in the Eastern Partnership countries**.





Ministers reaffirmed the vital importance of a well-functioning judiciary for the consolidation of democracy and rule of law and, in this context, encouraged Eastern Partnership countries to pursue **key judicial reforms**, namely in what concerns the **recruitment and career systems of judges and prosecutors and disciplinary systems**. Ministers invited the Eastern Partnership Rule of Law panel to discuss at one of its forthcoming meetings questions linked to merit-based appointments, accountability, access to justice and efficiency.

Ministers took note of the information provided by the European Commission regarding recent developments in the EU on **mobility and border management**, namely the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and the revised visa suspension mechanism. Ministers also noted the proposal presented by the delegation of Georgia for establishing an annual conference on justice reform amongst Eastern Partnership countries as well as an Eastern Partnership regional network on judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters.

